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In Cold Type

Iranian Arrests

Iranian students have been, perhaps, the most visible political presence on American campuses since the end of the Vietnam war—especially at the University of Kentucky. And it is not surprising that as the civil crisis in Iran deepens and the U.S. interjects itself more directly into the fray, officials at the university would attempt to silence dissidents.

On September 28, three Americans and eight Iranians were convicted for their peaceful protest during the April 12 campus visit of CIA director Stansfield Turner. A six-member jury in Fayette County decided that ~~demonstrations~~ efforts to publicize CIA relationships with the Iranian government and the University of Kentucky at Lexington constituted a breach of peace so serious that extraordinary sentences ranging from 45 days to the maximum 90 days in jail, plus \$250 fines, were imposed on all but one defendant (a minor who pleaded guilty to avoid deportation).

Turner, who is on the board of advisers of Patterson School of Diplomacy and Commerce, had been invited to speak there by its dean, Vincent Davis. Davis and the School of Diplomacy have been the subject of speculation concerning their relationship with the CIA. In addition, the university placement service has actually admitted a "rather loose" link with the CIA.

The 11 protestors were convicted under a state statute that deems it criminal "when with intent to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting, procession, or gathering [a person] does any act tending to obstruct or interfere with it physically, or makes any utterance or gesture or display designed to outrage the sensibilities of the group." The state argued that by holding up signs, the 11 had intended to be so disruptive that Turner would not have been able to deliver his address and that the audience would have been too outraged by the anti-CIA display to listen to him.

And so the three-day trial (the longest misdemeanor trial in Fayette County history) began. Witnesses for the prosecution were called. The arresting officers seemed as eager to testify as they'd been to notify local immigration officials shortly after the incident happened. The prosecutors called a group of blue-blooded witnesses. One of them, Mimi Lewis—the daughter of ex-Kentucky gover-

nor and former professional baseball commissioner, A. B. "Happy" Chandler—testified that her hopes for a hospitable bluegrass welcome had been dashed, first by the outdoor demonstration in a "free speech area" (it seems that there are also "no free speech areas," too) and then by the "small, dark people exhibiting signs inside." The state plea-bargained twice—offering \$15 fines and then \$10 fines with suspended sentences for guilty pleas. Both were rejected by the defendants. And, although Judge Paul Gudgel had noted privately that the state's case was weak, he denied all motions to acquit the 11 and declare the statute unconstitutional. Then, while delivering instructions to the jury, Gudgel apologized for his mispronunciation of the Iranians' names because he was not learned in the "Pakistani language." Foreigners who "have established themselves as nuisances in the eyes of many Lexingtonians" was the topic of a *Lexington Leader* editorial. Bail was set at \$3000 for the Iranians; the Americans were released on their own recognizance.

The following week, the streets of Lexington were filled with Moslem student hunger strikes, parades, and placards denouncing the plight of the 11 and demanding their release. As about 250 people marched outside the municipal building, Judge Gudgel arrived for sentencing accompanied by bodyguards and reportedly wearing a bulletproof vest. Inside, he informed the 11 that they were "antisocial" and "dangerous" and upped the stakes to \$5000 cash bond for each American and an unbelievable \$15,000 for each Iranian. But then, last week, from out of the Kentucky mountains, the unlikely heroes of the story appeared: John and Louise Smiley, retired restaurant and hotel owners, stunned the town by delivering the total \$125,000 bond for the release of all the prisoners. Dressed in coat and tie and looking like a Baptist preacher, Smiley, accompanied by about 100 supporters, went to the jail and told reporters that the convictions were a "miscarriage of justice" and that he was "really ashamed of Kentucky justice. I'm a compassionate person and I think that what they've done to these people is wrong."

A surprised Judge Gudgel was quoted by two separate sources as saying that Smiley was "a good Moslem, not a good Christian." Gudgel was also alleged to have questioned whether the Iranian Student Association had sent "terrorists" to force the Smileys to post bond. The Turner incident was the second instance within weeks of a division of the University of Kentucky acting against Iranian students. At the request of local immigration officials, Jefferson Community College in Louisville had attempted to set uniquely stringent academic standards for foreign students. Because of deportation hazards resulting from a drop in academic status, the students fought the college. They won.